

NESS BANK CHURCH

Congregational Newsletter

February/March 2024 - No 1021



Congregation Formed 1787

Present Church Opened 1901

Dear Friends

By now we have, hopefully, survived the worst of the winter, and perhaps we are even daring to dream of spring, with its warmth and colour and new life. I'm sure we could all do with a bit of that, particularly as we seem to be confronted with so much bleak news at the moment. Certainly any news which we see about the state of our national church seems to be about as bleak as it gets. The Guardian recently featured a report on "The retreat of organised religion in Scotland" commenting that "Churches of all denominations are being sold across Scotland as congregations dwindle, donations plunge and clerics retire." Who wouldn't want a bit of 'new life' to emerge in that context?



In our congregation here at Ness Bank we had our own disappointment in December when our plans to introduce a new minister didn't work out as we had hoped. By the time we get to Easter it will be two years since we had our own minister, a situation which is due in part to all the changes which are going on in our denomination at the moment. Even the overseeing body of which we are a part, has changed in the meantime, with the historic Inverness Presbytery coming to an end and the new but rather more distant sounding 'Presbytery of the Highlands and the Hebrides' coming into existence.

However, while we are clearly affected by that bigger picture, at local level things are a lot brighter. Our Nominating Committee were disappointed by how things worked out in December, but in line with that theme of looking ahead to better times and new beginnings, it has reconvened and its members are still full of energy and enthusiasm for their task.

Indeed during what, in many ways, is a challenging time for our congregation, our Sunday attendances are on the increase and the level of our offerings is very encouraging. Could Ness Bank be a beacon of light in our gloomy church landscape? I certainly hope so. None of that happens easily of course. It is a result of work and commitment by many people, and we can only continue to flourish as more of us find ways to get involved and offer our skills and our time.

When will we have our own minister again? Sooner rather than later I hope. Yet more importantly, I hope that when we do, that person will find themselves coming in to a community which is healthy and active so that we can all continue to progress and grow together.

We have survived the worst and we are daring to dream again. May that dreaming be faith-filled and visionary and active as we all pull together into whatever the future may bring.

Best wishes
Ian Manson

The Difference

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish and I didn't have the time to pray.
Problems just tumbled about me and heavier came each task.
'Why doesn't God help me?' I wondered.
He answered, 'You didn't ask'.
I wanted to see joy and beauty but the day toiled on, gray and bleak,
I wondered why God didn't show me.
He said, 'But you didn't seek'.
I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided,
'My child, you didn't knock'.
I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day.
I had so much to accomplish and I had to take time to pray.

Anon

Congregational Register

New Members

Shona MacDiarmid District 31 Elder: Anne Sutherland

Jock Ramsey District 1 Elder: Donald Macdonald

Death

21 September: Douglas Sommerville

Funeral held on 5 October

Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee reconvened in early January for our first meeting of 2024. I am delighted to report that everyone on the team felt re-enthused after the Christmas break and focused on the task at hand. Over the break we have received more interest regarding our vacancy and also some suggestions from members of the congregation about candidates they feel it would be worth the team investigating.

We have some very positive avenues to explore and with God's guidance hopefully we will make good progress and things will develop post-haste. We plan to meet again before the end of January.

Gordon Leitch

The Copper Bottle

The Copper Bottle in the vestibule has been emptied and has raised £209.91 for the Highland Hospice.

The next two fills of the Copper Bottle will go towards the **Bught Stop Cosy Café**. This project brings together volunteers from Ness Bank and the Bught Community to provide a warm space with food and friendship at lunchtime on Mondays for residents on the west side of Ness Bank's parish.

Finance Team



The Guild

The Guild has had a very enjoyable session so far, as we deal with the third year of the strategy "Look forward in Faith" and this year's theme of "New Wine, New Wineskins."

Our project this year is the Vine Trust's Kanzunzu Village of Hope in Tanzania. We held a very successful coffee afternoon last August and the proceeds from that will go towards supporting this project. On 9th January we enjoyed a lovely festive lunch in the Craigmonie Hotel, and below is a photo of this event.



Our other meetings over the next few weeks include a talk on energy saving, a demonstration on exercises suitable for older people and a talk from Professor McBryde. Our syllabus is on the noticeboard in the vestibule and we would love to meet some new members. There is no charge initially and we welcome anyone who might just want to come now and again.

More information can be obtained from me on 07425154715.

Anne Sutherland

Property Team Report

For a good many decades, Ness Bank Church has benefitted hugely from volunteers, of various professions, giving of their time and talents in caring for the church building and the manse.

Over the years, Architects, a Master Builder, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers, a Painter & Decorator, a Quantity Surveyor, the Beadles and many others have worked together, managing repairs and maintenance, often saving the church having to meet labour costs by doing the work themselves. Other matters dealt with have included cost planning, obtaining tenders and managing contracts, whilst keeping the buildings functional for users. The camaraderie is great; we work well together, all benefitting from shared expertise!

Planned refurbishments were held up, first by Covid then by the moratorium on all but essential maintenance work, whilst the Church of Scotland deliberated on the future of the church across Scotland. The refurbishment plans will now need to be reviewed, then updated costings obtained, before approval to proceed can be sought from the Finance Team.

As you will recall, the Kirk Session decided the existing manse should be retained, rather than sell up and purchase a new house, which would have complied with the current Building Regulations. Some time ago, 121 George Street issued an edict that all manses were to be upgraded to achieve an Energy Performance Rating of 'C' or higher by 2025. Our first task was thus to commission an Energy Performance Assessment; this came up with an 'F' rating. With 15 Ballifeary Road being 100+ years old, achieving a 'C' was going to be quite an undertaking. Suffice to say, the external walls have been insulated, the loft now has a 400mm layer of insulation (it is no longer available for storage) and the domestic hot water and central heating controls have been upgraded to facilitate remote control from a smart phone. A 'C' rating has been attained.

Other work followed: the kitchen units, including appliances, have been replaced, as has the shower enclosure in the ground floor toilet, and the entire house has been re-decorated internally, leaving external painting to complete in 2024. Outside, defective pointing on the house walls has been replaced, two cypress-type trees were felled and an ash tree substantially cut back, by contractors.

At the manse, two members of the team in particular did a very considerable amount of preparatory work, both internally and outside, to enable contractors to come on site and progress immediately with the new work, undoubtedly saving the church money. A church member who brought a mower and helped keep the lawns tidy, also very kindly funded professional gardeners, who tidied up the shrubberies and boundary hedges. We are much indebted to them. There are one or two small jobs still to do, mostly outside, including the re-erection of the greenhouse - if the new minister wishes to have it - before a final clean and the manse is ready to be occupied.

Meantime, the clock ticks on, with two more team members having passed the 80 milestone in 2023. Most current members of the Property Team will retire in early 2024. Succession planning has been raised constantly over recent years at Kirk Session and Team Leader meetings, with Presbytery Property Conveners when opportunities arose, and by the Property Team Members approaching church members, all to no avail. With no one coming forward to continue the work, it seems likely that a Property Maintenance contractor may have to be employed, obviously at a cost. Let us pray for a positive resolution of this matter.

David Bain



The Baby and Toddler Group continues to meet on a Wednesday morning from 0930-1130, during term time, and anyone with a child under school age will be very welcome. We have around 10-15 children who enjoy free play time, with a snack included. Tea and coffee are available for the adults and this is usually accompanied by some cake! There is a charge of £2 per family. Some of this money helps to support a child in Guatemala through the Adopt a Child charity.

Please contact me for any further information on 07425154715.

Anne Sutherland

Ness Bank Church is online at www.nessbankchurch.org.uk

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New look Presbytery for the Kirk across the Highlands and Islands

The beginning of 2024 marks the start of a new chapter for the Church of Scotland across the north of Scotland with the creation of Clèir Eilean Ì, a single presbytery which will cover almost half of Scotland.

Clèir Eilean Ì – Gaelic for the Presbytery of the Island of Iona – held its first meeting online last week, bringing together ministers, elders and others across an area which stretches from the tip of Argyll to John O'Groats and from the Western Isles to Moray.

Clèir Eilean Ì, the Presbytery of Iona, takes its new name from the cradle of Christianity in the Highlands and Islands.

As part of the wider reorganisation of the Church to create a more sustainable Kirk and lay the foundations for future growth, Clèir Eilean Ì brings together nine former presbytery areas. This will allow them to share resources and, for the first time, ministers and congregations across the region can call on full-time support staff to help in their mission of spreading the Good News of Jesus.

Rev Doug McRoberts, who was confirmed as Clèir Eilean Ì's first moderator at its inaugural session, believes this will make a big difference to the Kirk across the region.

"Every one of our previous presbyteries has been too small to have a full-time clerk, let alone any other full-time posts" he said.

"Now that central resource will be available to everybody within the presbytery, and the first three positions will be in place within the first month of the presbytery's life. Beyond that, we are working with the Church's IT Department in Edinburgh to allow our Presbytery Clerk to be genuinely mobile, allowing him to work anywhere in the area. This is about central Church resourcing presbyteries which will in turn resource ministry activities and mission work on the ground."



Taking on the key role of Presbytery Clerk is Rev Rory MacLeod, previously the clerk to the Presbytery of Lochcarron-Skye, the first to step into the role.



"No other calling would have persuaded me to leave my charge of Strath and Sleat, which I love" Mr MacLeod stated. "My priority will be to get out and about so that all of our local churches feel supported and know that they are at the centre of Clèir Eilean Ì's activities."

The pooling of resources will also allow Clèir Eilean Ì to employ a full-time presbytery support officer, a full-time finance officer/treasurer, and eventually a full-time mission director. Property issues will be looked after by contracted local property specialists across the presbytery area in an approach which has already been trialled successfully in Argyll, which faces similar geographical challenges. *"We have learned some lessons from the other big presbyteries which have already been running for a year or more,"* Mr McRoberts said. *"Where things that haven't gone well for them, they have helpfully told us what to watch for and where things that have gone well for them that we haven't thought about, we have built these in to what we do."*

Given the scale of the new presbytery, covering 40 per cent of Scotland's landmass and including islands in both the Inner and Outer Hebrides, the four main business meetings held over the year will rely on the internet to keep everyone connected. However, local representatives will be encouraged to gather together in designated hubs, allowing for in-person fellowship while connecting remotely with their peers elsewhere.

Find out more about Clèir Eilean Ì at its new website: cei.presbytery.org.uk and on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/211849078641746>

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Update from the Session Clerk

The inaugural meeting of our new Presbytery (Clèir Eilean Ì) - the Church of Scotland in the Highlands and Hebrides - took place on Tuesday 9 January which was entirely online with 200+ participants from across the Highlands and Islands.

Malcolm MacBean

Familiar Faces in Ness Bank - This Month's Spotlight is on:

Helen Macpherson

Writing about myself takes me outwith my comfort zone but our Newsletter Editor is a very persuasive lady!

Faith, Family and Friends have carried me through many happy and sad times in my life and I firmly believe God is guiding me. His love never fails.

Native to Inverness, I was the fourth girl in a family of five children. Sadly, all my siblings have predeceased me.

Although my parents worked hard, money and resources were tight but despite this we all had a happy, secure childhood. We were each encouraged to follow our individual natures and to utilise any talents we had. I always maintained I was behind the door when God dispensed talents in our family and I got missed out!



I attended the Central Primary School, where I was awarded a prize for Bible Knowledge in P3 and the Headmaster's (Dux) medal in P7. I have never understood how that happened as I don't recall sitting exams! I do, however, remember being allowed to wear my Mum's gold watch to the Prize-giving! Athletics and swimming were my joy in primary school, with hockey, tennis and the Outdoor Club added when I progressed to Inverness Royal Academy (IRA).

My Bible prize at age 7 must have been recorded somewhere as I was asked to lead the Scripture Union Group in the Junior School. One didn't say 'no' to the teacher who asked me! On returning to Inverness less than three years ago, I was both horrified and delighted to meet one of the Junior School pupils who confirmed what I had always suspected - that the pupils were compelled to attend the Scripture Union meetings.

I enjoyed school, both primary and secondary, and treasure the friendships made during these days and also in later life. Following an IRA school year reunion, four of us plus our spouses and our English teacher and his wife met up each year to go

climbing and walking together for several days. Happy memories and some amazing photographs were taken during our 20 years together on the hills.

Following school, I trained as a nurse at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Several other qualifications followed, my ambition being to work at the ITU Leper Colony, Calabar, Nigeria - seeds sown during talks given by its founders, Dr A.B. Macdonald and his wife who were Missionaries linked to Ness Bank Church.

Church in these days was not just where we worshipped, it was our social life as well, and many happy and fun times were spent in Girls' Guildry (now Brigade), Sunday School, Bible Class, Youth Fellowship, teaching in Sunday School and - when they were desperate - playing the piano for the Boys' Brigade, fortunately VERY irregularly as I could only play two hymns! I even sang in the choir for a spell!!

My career plans changed suddenly when my beloved Dad was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. While nursing him at home, I met the man I was to marry. Sadly, Dad died before that happened. My husband and I had three sons - each one so special to me. We have come through a lot as a family but always there was help from somewhere - FAITH, FAMILY and FRIENDS. Sadly, my marriage ended. In time, I returned to Edinburgh and there met my childrens' stepfather. We met as serving elders in our church. John was the love of my life. We were married for 21 years. My sons loved and respected him and he them. He never tried to replace the boys' natural Dad, always including him in our family events and celebrations - he was truly special.

Having been ordained to the Eldership almost 45 years ago, it was a huge privilege being part of our church family in Edinburgh for 34 years, serving in too many roles to share here. My husband died in 2010. Grief is the price we pay for loving but death ends a life, not a relationship. Also involved in voluntary work outwith church, I eventually became involved with the Royal Overseas League in Edinburgh, latterly serving as its Scottish Chairperson.

Health issues arose and during the second lockdown I decided it was time to return home to Inverness, to be near family and to reconnect with my home church here in Ness Bank. I felt very strongly that God was guiding me. I still feel that way.

Helen Macpherson

The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us.



26th November 2023

'Getting ready for Christmas' was an exciting and significant Messy Church session as it reassured us that we can still attract families to Ness Bank! With a strong team of 15 from Ness Bank, we fed and entertained 55 guests made up of children and parents/carers.



The teaching, developed through drama, music and a short talk, was based on Mary's reactions to the announcement by the angel Gabriel. Many good conversations took place during the children's activity time, with some parents showing interest in coming back again.

We are pleased to say that an Easter-themed Messy Church is planned for **Sunday 17th March**. This is entitled 'Spring into Easter' and will be based on Paul Field's children's song 'Three days that changed the world.' The drama team will develop what happened on Friday and Saturday but the events and joy of Sunday is in the hands of a special guest! Chris Watt, Out of the Box (Scotland), will present the story using puppets and we are delighted to be working with such a talented guy!

We are planning ten child-based activities to support this event and we may ask if you could help out by donating or loaning some materials. The list will be put on the intimation sheet in a few weeks' time and will be included on the big screen. Meantime, chat with any member of the team if you want to learn more about the purpose of Messy Church.

Margaret Livingstone

PS Children attending church during morning worship are encouraged to come downstairs after the second hymn. The original Sunday School Team is providing active fun activities to occupy children of all ages: it's noisy and it's fun!

Against Breast Cancer Appeal

I would like to thank everyone who donated their old bras for this appeal. The response was amazing and we collected two large black bags which have been passed to the charity via Curves Gym in Inverness. They will now be recycled and used to raise funds for Breast Cancer Research.

Thank you once again.

Clover Jackman

Family

Last night our Wifi stopped working, so I had to spend a few hours with my family. They seem like good people.



Girls' Brigade

There was some exciting news at the end of October as Maria Roberts, Captain of 4B Inverness Company and leader at Riverside, had a beautiful baby boy! Both companies made banners and cards to congratulate Maria and Jak and welcome baby Connor.

Since the last newsletter, both 4B Inverness and Riverside have had their Enrolment Services. Riverside's service was held at ICF Trinity on 5 November 2023 and was led by Karen and Robbie Halkett, the Pastors. 4B's service was conducted by Malcolm MacBean at Hilton School on 5 December 2023. Anne Mcquarrie, Divisional President, attended both services. The companies are grateful for this pastoral support.

Both companies have been busy with their chosen topics and the large wooden Girls' Brigade badge has been in regular use this session as the girls learned about the various parts of the badge.

We reckon this large badge, which is much loved and borrowed by all the local companies, must be around fifty years old and if anyone knows who made it and when, please get in touch (email: riversidegbinv@gmail.com).



The girls have been thinking of others as Riverside contributed filled boxes and bags of individual items to the Blythswood Shoebox Appeal and 4B made a Christmas banner for a local care home.

Riverside ended the session with a Christmas Singalong on 11 December and the leaders were delighted and grateful to have so many come along to support and enjoy this event. 4B girls enjoyed a Christmas party on 12 December and were thrilled to meet little Connor when Maria popped in for a visit.

Hazel MacDonald



Blythwood Shoebox Appeal

A huge thank you to everyone who helped support the Shoebox Appeal in October and November. It was wonderful to see so many boxes taken away, filled with goodies and returned for us to pass on to Blythwood. We filled around 90 boxes, many carrier bags and handed in over £100 in cash donations. It was an amazing response!



And yes, we are looking ahead to the appeal that will launch again in the autumn. So, if you have a spare shoebox just leave it in the vestibule and we can get it wrapped in advance. If you're out shopping and see items reduced that can go into a shoebox, just get stocked up (March is a good time to get hat/scarf/gloves in the sales). If you still have an unused wrapped box from last year's appeal, just bring it back any Sunday and we can add it to our stock; or why not just pop the odd bit or piece into your regular shopping so you're ready to just fill the box in October and don't notice the cost so much. Thank you.

Janet Russell



Christmas Fayre

A great morning was had by everyone who attended the Christmas Fayre in November. There was a great buzz from stallholders and the tea and coffee brigade as they set up on the Friday; and again a great buzz on the day of the Fayre in the beautifully decorated halls.



So many of the congregation and people from the local area came along to support us, bought lots of goodies, and have a good natter over coffee and mince pies. Many individuals and groups had been working hard in the background preparing items for the stalls, which helped us raise the great sum of **£2757.62**. Many thanks to everyone who was involved in making the day such a success.

If you were lucky enough to win a hamper and don't need the basket, please just pop it into the vestibule any Sunday and we can use it again.



And please get your diaries out - open it at

SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2024

and pop the date of this year's Christmas Fayre into it.

Janet Russell

'Lenten Valentines'

This month both Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day fall on the same day! The link between the two can be summed up in terms of the nature of real love! Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, focuses on learning to love God more, as we give Him space in our lives. This is what Jesus found when He was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1-13).

Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread. Yet loving God and His word comes before satisfying physical desires. Satan tempted Jesus to worship him. However, worshipping God is an expression of loving God and serving Him. Finally, He was tempted to put God to the test, by jumping off the Temple. Real love for God does not put Him to the test, but wants to obey Him.

Lent also teaches us how to live out the love of God in practical ways, as we follow Jesus in the way of the Cross. We see this clearly demonstrated in the life and death of Saint Valentine.

Valentine was a Christian who demonstrated the importance of sharing God's love with others. We know little about him, except that he was a priest who lived in the 3rd Century AD and that he was martyred on 14th February. Emperor Claudius felt that soldiers in the Roman Army were distracted from their duty by their wives, and so had attempted to outlaw marriage. It is believed that Valentine married couples in secret, which is why today we celebrate our love for one another on his day.

In trying to understand the meaning of her revelations from God, Julian of Norwich found:

'What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing?

Know it well, love was His meaning.'

Windows

A wife texted her husband on a cold winter morning: "Windows frozen."

Her husband texted back: "Pour some lukewarm water over it."

The wife texted back five minutes later: "Computer's completely not working now."

Moderator-Designate of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

A minister who was discouraged from going to university and told that his Lanarkshire accent would hamper his life prospects has been announced as the next Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Rev Dr Shaw James Paterson will take up the role on Saturday 18 May 2024 and spend a year as the Kirk's ambassador.



Serving since 1991 as Minister at Strathaven Trinity Parish Church in Lanarkshire, he was expected to become a bricklayer like other family members before him, but took a different path and he went on to complete four degrees at Glasgow University, including a doctorate. The father of three, who is originally from Holytown, was told by teachers that there was no point continuing his studies, but was encouraged to do so at home. *"My father recognised something in me and I got in to study biology at Glasgow University"* he explains. *"He pushed me in a gentle and encouraging way. That moment when they shout Moderator – it will be for my Dad."*

During his time at Glasgow University, he supported himself by working at various jobs, including as a tiler. *"I still do some tiling for folk and I'm hands on with property in my church"* he says.

Straight after finishing his undergraduate degree, Dr Paterson married Christine at the University of Glasgow Memorial Chapel. She is now a senior member of the community nursing team.

Immediately thereafter he began a degree in divinity. *"They talk about a calling – it was this sense that God was chipping away and chipping away. I did not want to be a minister and I felt a bit like Jonah – I thought go away, I want to do my career in science. Eventually I had a torturous night and I thought of Isaiah 6: 'whom shall I send...send me. I basically woke up and said, OK God you win, send me, I'll do it. Having made the decision, I then knew it was the right one."*

Reflecting on more than 30 years in a parish, including 10 years also working as a Presbytery Clerk, he says he *"thrives"* on pastoral work, albeit there have been some very tough moments. *"Undoubtedly the most challenging point of my ministry has been supporting people around child death. How do you deal with it and stay above your own tears?"*

He plans to spend next year *"listening to as many people as possible."* *If you asked me for three words to describe what's important to me as a minister – and indeed as a Moderator – it would be people, people, people"* he says. *"People in the pews, in the parish. People of all ages, from pupils to pensioners, and every stage in between. I love connecting with people, hearing their stories and reminding them that I care, the Church cares, God cares."*

Acknowledging that *"there is a lot of upset"* currently across the Church of Scotland, particularly due to the planned closure of Kirk buildings in order to safeguard the future of the organisation, Dr Paterson says that *"one of the themes I'd like to have for my year as Moderator is building together – it goes back to my roots. As a Church we have strong foundations and it might not be my building or your building that's kept, but our foundations are in Christ. We need to build together and we need to come together – we need to realise almost everyone is losing something. We have to try and get over any sense of animosity. We're a Church together and we need to go forward together to build on the foundations of all our forebears."*

Other hopes that Dr Paterson has for his time representing the Church include highlighting the work of NHS staff, particularly due to family connections and his regular visits to hospitals.

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Remembering those who live in Care Homes

Care Homes are one type of communal establishments measured by the Office for National Statistics in the 2021 Census. In 2022, there were 408,371 people living in care homes across the United Kingdom.

Some residents enjoy regular visits from family or friends, while others lead a very lonely life. Some will 'pass on' relatively quickly, while others may live in the same room for several years.

Some residents are collected for church, and some join church services in their Home, while others have to resort to radio or television for spiritual encouragement. Only a relative few will have the technical competence and equipment to live-stream.

What does this mean for church leaders? It is likely they will have some church members or ex-members living in Care Homes. While for some, live-streaming of services will be a huge blessing, they do not replace regular visiting, if possible.

Giving elderly people the opportunity to go outside (in their wheelchair) will normally be enthusiastically welcomed and, for some, especially the opportunity to attend Sunday Service in their wheelchair. Pastoral work, gifts of flowers from the church, and personal prayer are hugely important, in the context of end-of-life spiritual care.

A visiting team from the Church to take a regular Sunday service is not only an encouragement to believers, but can also be a gentle encouragement to those without faith, particularly if accompanied by a regular opportunity for Communion (for believers) and hymn singing (favourites) for those with Sunday School and Church memories.

(Parish Pump)

Did Noah fish?

A Sunday school teacher asked, "Johnny, do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the Ark?"

"No," replied Johnny. "How could he, with just two worms?"



Prayer Diary



**Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes!
He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others
who have all kinds of troubles,
using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.
(2 Corinthians 1 vs 3-4)**

It is suggested that this prayer diary should be used as an additional resource for private daily prayers. The prayer points can be used as you choose each day. Give thanks for each topic as you pray and bring the needs of every situation before God.

During the week beginning 11 February please pray for:

- Professor Bill McBryde who has continued to lead worship since April of last year and who will now preach three out of four Sundays. Father, we give grateful thanks for his inspirational preaching during this time of vacancy.
- those ministers who will lead worship once a month.
- Rev Ian Manson who is our Interim Moderator and oversees the meetings of the Kirk Session and the Nominations Committee.
- the Nominations Committee as they continue to seek for our new Minister.
- the Pastoral Team who visit members and friends at home, in hospital and in care homes. The Flower Committee continue to provide wonderful floral displays which are distributed to members who have been bereaved and those unwell.

During the week beginning 18 February please pray for:

- Ian, our organist, and the choir who continue to lead praise every Sunday. Lord, we give thanks for their dedication and commitment.
- members and friends who are unwell whether they are at home, in hospital or in a care home. Father, we ask that Your strength, love and comfort will enable them to cope with their illness.
- members of The Guild in Ness Bank and Guilds Together as members continue to meet and enjoy their time of fun and fellowship. Give thanks for the skill of the Work Party as they continue to provide many garments which are given to charities and to those in need.
- those members and friends who take part in the rotas for welcome teams, reading the lessons and providing coffee/tea after worship.
- everyone struggling with the cost of living and finding hardship trying to pay energy and food bills.

During the week beginning 25 February please pray for:

- the Session Clerk and the Kirk Session. Heavenly Father, we give thanks for their dedication to the work of Ness Bank and also for their pastoral work within their districts.
 - families and friends grieving for the loss of a loved one, whether it be recent or long ago. Heavenly Father, we understand the pain of bereavement, and we ask that Your love and strength will sustain them in the days that lie ahead.
 - the councillors and staff in Highland Council who continue to provide essential services throughout the region. God, we give thanks for the gritting staff who go out in wintry weather to ensure that roads and pavements are cleared of snow and ice.
 - the volunteers who visit Ach an Eas on a monthly basis for a short service of worship for residents and staff. Lord, this outreach is so important to those in care homes.
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- teachers, support staff and pupils in our schools and pray that there will be no further disruption to their education. We ask Your blessing on pupils studying for standard and higher grades in preparation for the exams in May and June.

During the week beginning 3 March please pray for:

- the volunteers who operate the livestreaming service every Sunday which enables those members and friends unable to attend to church to enjoy worship from their homes.
- the staff in the NHS and particularly those in our area. Lord, the services in hospitals and community continue to be stretched and the staff under pressure.
- the Crafties who meet every Tuesday for fun and fellowship, and who create lovely crafts which are sold for church funds.
- staff and volunteers of Highland Foodbank who continue to provide an emergency three-day parcel of food to those in need.
- staff, volunteers and patients in the Highland Hospice. We ask Your blessing on those receiving care in the hospice and give thanks for the expertise of the staff in caring for them.

During the week beginning 10 March please pray for:

- the church officer, church administrator and cleaner who provide such wonderful support to the congregation.
 - the work of Christian Aid throughout the UK and overseas.
 - those living with mental health issues and those involved in their treatment and care.
 - the Cosy Café at the Bught Stop which is providing a warm space, food and company on Mondays at lunchtime. Give thanks for the volunteers from Ness Bank and the community who give their time to support this initiative.
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- the staff, volunteers and residents in care homes throughout the area. Give thanks for the loving care provided by staff for those who can no longer stay in their own homes.

During the week beginning 17 March please pray for:

- the staff, volunteers and trustees of Inverness Foodstuff as this organisation continues to provide a wonderful service to the homeless, the vulnerable and those in need. Give thanks for the support services that come along to help the participants and also the supermarkets and organisations donating the provisions required to provide meals.
- the young people who are involved in Ness Bank. Give thanks for the leaders and helpers involved in Girls' Brigade, Boys' Brigade, Baby & Toddler Group and Messy Church.
- the people of Ukraine as the war continues causing citizens to be injured and buildings destroyed. Remember those Ukrainians who have fled to other countries and pray that they will be able to return to their homeland at some point in the future.
- peace and unity throughout the world. It is our prayer that people can live in a world free from violence and strife.
- the homeless and the vulnerable who have no permanent home and do not have the financial security to rent a property. During this cold weather especially pray for those rough sleepers and those without a place to stay during the day.

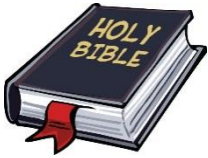
During the week beginning 24 March please pray for:

- this Holy week when we remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross but rose again on Easter Sunday. Give thanks for the risen Lord.
 - the situation in the Red Sea and ask for safety for the pilots, navigators and ground crew involved in the conflict.
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- members of the new Church of Scotland presbytery in the north of Scotland - Clèir Eilean I.
 - those involved in the care and support of people with dementia. This number is increasing and many patients are unable to receive the home support that they need, so we ask Your blessing on families undertaking this care.
 - the staff and volunteers of CrossReach throughout Scotland but particularly in our local area.

World Mission Prayer Topics:

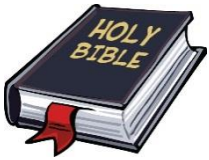
- **Blythwood Care** praises God for the volunteers that support the Fundraising Team and fundraising efforts of the organisation. Whether speaking to groups about the work, helping with the administrative tasks behind-the-scenes, supporting staff at events or organising local collections, pray that they will be blessed in their vital contribution.
 - **Scripture Union** - expanding their ministry to young people at the margins is a strategic priority. Give thanks for developing relationships with churches and organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers. We thank God for the young people they send to SU holidays. Pray that they will find the hope and joy that Jesus offers each one of them.
 - **Tearfund** - advocacy is a powerful tool that can be used to influence the decisions and policies of people in power to address the underlying causes of poverty. We ask for God's favour on communities and churches around the world who are speaking out against injustice, defending people living in poverty, holding those in power to account and empowering people to speak out for themselves.
 - **CrossReach** - the issues that lead to homelessness are often complex. CrossReach can offer accommodation and practical support to help people off the streets as quickly as possible. They also look to resolve any underlying and connected issues that are making it hard for people to remain settled and secure over the longer term. Lord, we ask Your blessing on the staff and volunteers who provide such wonderful support to those in need.
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Daily Bible Readings

February 2024

Thursday	1	Joshua 2: 17 - 24
Friday	2	Joshua 3: 1 - 17
Saturday	3	Joshua 4: 1 - 9
Sunday	4	Psalm 124
Monday	5	Joshua 4: 10; 5: 1
Tuesday	6	Joshua 5: 2 - 12
Wednesday	7	Joshua 5: 13; 6: 1 - 20
Thursday	8	Joshua 6: 21 - 27
Friday	9	Joshua 23: 1 - 16
Saturday	10	Joshua 24: 1 - 31
Sunday	11	Psalm 125
Monday	12	Galatians 1: 1 - 10
Tuesday	13	Galatians 1: 11 - 24
Wednesday	14	Galatians 2: 1 - 10
Thursday	15	Galatians 2: 11 - 21
Friday	16	Galatians 3: 1 - 14
Saturday	17	Galatians 3: 15 - 22
Sunday	18	Psalm 126
Monday	19	Galatians 3: 23; 4: 1 - 7
Tuesday	20	Galatians 4: 8 - 20
Wednesday	21	Galatians 4: 21 - 31
Thursday	22	Galatians 5: 1 - 12
Friday	23	Galatians 5: 13 - 26
Saturday	24	Galatians 6: 1 - 18
Sunday	25	Psalm 127
Monday	26	Zephaniah 1: 1 - 13
Tuesday	27	Zephaniah 1: 14; 2: 1 - 3
Wednesday	28	Zephaniah 2: 4 - 11
Thursday	29	Zephaniah 2: 12 - 15



Daily Bible Readings

March 2024

Friday	1	Zephaniah 3: 1 - 13
Saturday	2	Zephaniah 3: 14 - 20
Sunday	3	Psalms 128
Monday	4	1 Corinthians 1: 1 - 9
Tuesday	5	1 Corinthians 1: 10 - 17
Wednesday	6	1 Corinthians 1: 18; 2: 1 - 5
Thursday	7	1 Corinthians 2: 6 - 16
Friday	8	1 Corinthians 3: 1 - 23
Saturday	9	1 Corinthians 4: 1 - 21
Sunday	10	Psalms 129
Monday	11	1 Corinthians 5: 1 - 13
Tuesday	12	1 Corinthians 6: 1 - 11
Wednesday	13	1 Corinthians 6: 12 - 20
Thursday	14	1 Corinthians 7: 1 - 16
Friday	15	1 Corinthians 7: 17 - 24
Saturday	16	1 Corinthians 7: 25 - 40
Sunday	17	Psalms 130
Monday	18	Proverbs 1: 1 - 19
Tuesday	19	Proverbs 1: 20 - 33
Wednesday	20	Proverbs 2: 1 - 22
Thursday	21	Proverbs 3: 1 - 18
Friday	22	Proverbs 4: 1 - 9
Saturday	23	Proverbs 4: 10 - 27
Sunday	24	John 12: 12 - 16
Monday	25	John 18: 1 - 14
Tuesday	26	John 18: 15 - 27
Wednesday	27	John 18: 28 - 40
Thursday	28	John 19: 1 - 16a
Friday	29	John 19: 16b - 27
Saturday	30	John 19: 28 - 42
Sunday	31	John 20: 1 - 10